

# THE MINORITIES OF CHINA

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## 1. Introduction

Though minorities constitute only 8.4% of the current population of the People's Republic of China, they played an important role in China's emergence as a nation-state. As they also occupy 60% of China's landmass in strategic peripheral areas, minorities are crucial to China's future.

These non-Han peoples of China are known as Minority Nationalities (*shaoshu minzu* 少数民族), a concept based on the Stalinist notion of *nacional'nost'*: a group with a common language, territory, socioeconomic basis and psychological makeup. (The latter criterion was in practice defined so broadly as to include customs and even ancestry.) In addition to the majority Han Chinese Nationality, today 55 Minority Nationalities enjoy official recognition.

Not all of China's minorities have received official recognition; some distinct ethnic groups have been lumped together under one Nationality. Though some scholars have argued that non-dominant Han groups should also be considered minorities, in both China and Taiwan, the term "minority" refers exclusively to groups other than the Han Chinese.

Chinese attitudes towards non-Han peoples have been strongly dichotomized over the centuries. These views have evolved from an empire-vs.-barbarians dichotomy to a paternalistic more/less-advanced division of China's citizens. Official policy maintains that each ethnic group should have the right to develop its own culture and language, though integration remains a key goal. The degree of national integration of minorities varies widely. Some groups, such as the Zhuang and Koreans, are well integrated; others, such as the Tibetans and Uyghurs, retain a strong sense of separate cultural identity.

## 2. Modern populations, locales, and economy

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the world's most populous country, with over 1.25 billion citizens (1998), 160 million of which are officially minorities. The largest minority groups

(with figures in millions from the 2000 census) are Zhuang (16.2), Manchu (10.7), Hui (i.e. Muslim Chinese, 9.8), Miao (7.4), Uyghurs (8.4), Yi (7.8), Tujia (8.0), Mongols (5.8), and Tibetans (5.4). Administratively, China is comprised of 23 provinces (including, according to the PRC government, Taiwan), five municipalities; minorities occupy most of China's border areas, largely in five minority Autonomous Regions and close to 200 minority Autonomous Counties.

On the island of Taiwan (historically a part of China and known as the Republic of China), the 20 different Austronesian minority groups constitute less than 2% of Taiwan's population (433,689 in 2002).

The People's Republic of China has a Gross Domestic Product per citizen of \$750; on Taiwan, the figure is \$12,333 (1998). The poorest areas of China are Tibet, Gansu, southern Xinjiang, and Guangxi: all largely minority areas. Half of the counties officially listed as the poorest in China are in minorities; fully 80% of those without adequate food and clothing are in minority areas. The standard of living for most minorities rose in the 1990s; the average annual income in Autonomous minority areas rose from 2040 to 6822 *yuan* (402 to 1653 *yuan* in rural areas, not adjusted for inflation). However, inequalities widened, with the average income of largely Han cities in minority areas was generally six times that of largely minority towns and rural areas (e.g. in Xinjiang, 8846 *yuan* in the Han oil town of Karamay vs. 1223 *yuan* in Kashgar).

Some minority areas are rich in natural resources, such as Xinjiang (oil, natural gas, minerals) and Manchuria (coal). Though local people have indirectly benefited from the infrastructural development such as railroad and highway construction associated with the extraction of these resources, most of the jobs are given to non-minorities, particularly at the management level. The low population density of minority areas is seen as another resource, and has led to the optional subsidized migration and mandatory resettlement of millions of Chinese to Yunnan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia. Since 2000, China has actively implemented a

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plan to develop the Western Regions: Shaanxi, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Qinghai, Gansu, and the five Autonomous Regions.

Since the early 1980s, ethnotourism has been an increasingly important part of the minority area economies. The mystiques of the Silk Road, Genghis Khan, and Tibetan Buddhism have drawn overseas and Chinese tourists alike to Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet, respectively. Between 1990–1999, income from foreign tourists rose from 12 to 85.8 million dollars.

### 3. The “Barbarians” and Imperial China: a History of Han & non-Han relations

The majority Han Chinese civilization has a 4000-year history as attested in the so-called oracle bone inscriptions. Though non-Han peoples do not have such early written records, archaeological and linguistic evidence of cultural contact suggest that a variety of human groups lived within the territory that is today China.

Chinese civilization originated along the lowest reaches of the Yellow River and expanded to the north and west to the Loess plateau, and south to the coasts. From the earliest Shang dynasty (18–12<sup>th</sup> c. BCE) to the end of the imperial system in 1911, Chinese imperial strength and the size of its territory expanded and shrank along with the fortunes of the Empire. Until around 1000 CE, non-Han peoples of the region were quite autonomous. During times when the Han Chinese dynasties were weak, non-Han peoples raided and even sometimes conquered the Chinese territories. These non-Chinese peoples often partially adopted Han Chinese titles (such as emperor), dress, and even language, but required all citizens to submit to some of their own practices (such as the obligatory queue – hair braid – for men during the Manchu Qing dynasty). Most of these non-Han dynasties were short-lived, but not all: the last, the Manchu Qing dynasty, lasted from 1644 until 1911. Other significant “foreign (minority) dynasties” included the Hsiung-nu, a Central Asian steppe people, who ruled northern China between 311–589, and the Mongol Yuan dynasty 1280–1368 CE. Both the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing dynasties significantly expanded Chinese territory, and also resulted in an ever-more multicultural empire. The five major civilizations within the Chinese territory were implicitly recognized in the 17th–18th century publication the Pentaglot Dictionary 五體清文鑑 in Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian, Uyghur, and Chinese.

Those peoples on the periphery of the empire whose language and culture differed from that of the ruling were considered barbarians. Ironically, even “foreign dynasty” rulers such as Manchus and Mongols were not immune to such views. Written records generally termed the peoples to the north and west *hu* 胡 (which we may call ‘northern barbarian’), while those to the south were known as *Yi* 夷 or *Man* 蠻 ‘Southern Barbarians’; indigenous peoples of Taiwan were often termed *Dong Di* 東氏 or *Dong Fan* 東番 ‘Eastern Savages.’

### 4. Premodern Chinese Nationalism and non-Han groups

Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese nationalistic identity coalesced around the concept of a Han nationality, whose population spoke Sinitic languages (i.e. Chinese “dialects”). The equation of Chinese with Han provided another good reason to overthrow the “foreign” Manchu Qing dynasty at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the 1911 Revolution by Chinese Nationalists, Sun Yat-sen used *minzu* in the sense of ‘nation-state,’ thus extending the notion of *Zhonghua minzu* ‘Chinese Nationality’ to include all major groups within the Chinese territory. Many historians consider this broadened definition simply due to territorial considerations.

The phrase *shaoshu minzu* ‘Minority Nationality,’ first used by the Nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen in 1924, took on a more prominent role in the inclusive rhetoric of the Communist Party during the Civil War in the 1930s and 1940s. Though the Communist message was overtly egalitarian to recruit all peoples, Minority Nationalities were consistently referred to in paternalistic terms: the Party would help *ruoxiao minzu* ‘weak and small nationalities’ and *luobou minzu* ‘backward nationalities.’ Such terms reflect the social Darwinist thinking that prevailed at the time, which implicitly advocated the cultural assimilation of ethnic groups into the “more advanced” Han state.

The term *xiongdì minzu* ‘brother nationality’ was also introduced and is still used today. In the compound word *xiongdì* (lit. ‘elder:brother-younger:brother’), it is clear that by ‘elder brother’ the ‘more civilized’ Hans are meant, while the ‘younger brothers’ are all other peoples. Though this ‘Han chauvinism’ has been denounced since the Communist Revolution, the Han people are expected to assist the mi-

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minorities in economic, social and cultural development.

## 5. The Communist Revolution and Nationality Identification

Since 1 October 1949 the government has been a socialist people's republic, founded by Mao Zedong. Policy on minorities during the 1950s was strongly influenced both by Soviet Nationality policies as well as Russian ethnographic theories. The PRC Common Programme (interim constitution) of 1949 is egalitarian, asserting that all Nationalities were equal, and that Nationalities each had the "freedom to develop their dialects and languages, and to preserve or reform their traditional customs, and religious beliefs" (Articles 50 & 53). In theory, then, the Han is but one of many ethnic groups, each of whose culture and language should be respected. The People's Republic of China initiated a two-pronged process to identify Nationalities and reinforce this concept into the public consciousness. First, teams of linguists were sent out all over China to investigate that status of ethnolinguistic groups; second, any group considering itself to be a Nationality was encouraged to formally petition for recognition. Already by 1955, more than 400 groups had applied for recognition, 200 alone in southwestern Yunnan province. In the subsequent two years, the Central government's State Ethnic Affairs Commission formally declared 55 Nationalities, using the Stalinist criteria for Nationalities to evaluate data from the research teams. Political considerations were a factor in many decisions as well. Only one group, the Tibeto-Burman Jinuo of Yunnan, has since successfully petitioned (in 1979) to be added to the list. Many others, lumped together under one overarching Nationality name, have tried unsuccessfully to gain official recognition.

Some scholars outside China have suggested that some Han Chinese subgroups constitute minorities, particularly the Yue speakers (of which Canton is a part) and the Hakkas. Both meet most of the criteria for Nationality status, having a unique territory, identity, and language varieties unintelligible to speakers of the Standard Language. Yet Hakkas and Yue speakers share the Chinese writing system and consider themselves Chinese, so they are classified as Han; to classify them as separate groups would directly counter the aims of the unified modern Chinese nation-state.

## 6. Regional political autonomy, in theory

The Central Government then established areas with over 30% Minority Nationalities autonomous organs of self-government. The National Minority Regional Autonomy Law adopted in 1984 provides specific guidelines for minority regional autonomy through the People's Congress and Governments. These included five Autonomous Regions (Inner Mongolia, founded on 1 May 1947; Xinjiang Uygur, 1 October 1955; Guangxi Zhuang, 15 March 1958; Ningxia Hui, 25 October 1958; and Tibet, 1 September 1965), 30 Autonomous Prefectures and 120 Autonomous Counties (including three "banners"), in addition to more than 1,300 Autonomous Townships. Typically, the chair or vice-chair of the People's Congress Standing Committee in each Autonomous area is a member of the eponymous Minority Nationality; minority-cadre representation in the national People's Congress was over 14% in 2003, a significant rise from 6.6% in 1990.

National minority Autonomous area governments are by law empowered to enact legislation appropriate to local political, economic and cultural conditions; enact local holidays; independently control local revenue, and manage infrastructural and social-welfare projects.

In practice, the control of the Central Government and of the Han Nationality is strongly felt in minority Autonomous areas. Though the Autonomous area Committee chair is usually a member of the Autonomous area nationality (e.g. a Tibetan in Tibet), the vice-chair tends to wield real power, and he is invariably Han Chinese. To maintain the integrity of the state, the Central Government in Beijing frequently issues directives to Autonomous area governments.

Between 1979 and 1989, China encouraged increased autonomy in designated minority areas and allowed a cultural and religious revival in Han and minority areas alike. This trend towards openness came to an end, however, when the central government decided that cultural, religious and especially political expression was becoming a threat to the unity of the Chinese state. This resulted not only in the 1989 suppression of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square, but also the arrests of alleged separatists in minority Autonomous Regions in the 1990s. Martial law-like conditions were imposed in Tibet and Xinjiang from 1997 onwards as a means of stemming violent protests from separatists. Furthermore, controls on

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religious expression (see Religion, below) were re-introduced for all citizens of China. Still, it can be argued that this hardened minority policy is relatively unchanged since 1949. The government's message to the minorities is clear: as long as you play by our rules and support the Chinese state, we will help you develop and integrate.

To facilitate this development, China has enacted two types of preferential policies towards its National Minorities: university entrance quotas and family policies.

## 7. Preferential Policies for National Minorities: Education

China has made great strides in its goal of a universal nine years of education for its citizens, but the introduction of school fees in the 1990s meant that the poorest families no longer could afford to send their children to school. This has affected a disproportionate number of minorities. Still, the number of National Minority schoolchildren and teachers has steadily increased since the 1950s. Ideally, pupils are taught in their native language and Chinese from primary school onwards. In practice, minority-language education is offered only in areas with significant minority populations, and then only if the language has an official writing system: Korean, Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongolian, Yi, and Dai. Even if largely symbolic, this support of minority-language education by the central government far exceeded that of the former Soviet government for its minority languages. It has, in addition, supplied the national minority autonomous areas with large quantities of financial aid and material resources. As a result, the percentage of minority students at tertiary institutions increased between 1978-1992, declining from the mid 1990s onwards after the imposition of university fees.

Nonetheless, interest in bilingual education has waned in recent years, as many minority parents see economic advantages in having their children learn Chinese from an early age. At the tertiary level, minority-region universities have reduced minority-language courses or abandoned them altogether (e.g. Xinjiang University in 2002). Previously, minorities studying in the minority language would attend an extra "preparatory" year of university, but only receive credit for four years; moreover, these students had difficulty finding employment upon graduation.

At the tertiary level, China recognized early on the need to train minority cadres, teachers, and technicians. In 2001, the *Law on Regional*

*Autonomy* was amended to improve recruitment of National Minorities to government positions. From the 1950s, the central government, under the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, established institutes of tertiary education specifically for National Minorities: the Central Nationalities Institute (now University) in Beijing (est. 1951), and 12 regional Nationalities Institutes. Attending these institutions is lower prestige than national universities.

Despite preferential admissions standards, minorities are underrepresented in the national universities (6% at Beijing University, for example). Nonetheless, the use of preferential quotas (e.g. in Inner Mongolia) and differential exam requirements (e.g. in Xinjiang) was a significant equalizing factor in education, allowing 187,000 minority students to attend post-secondary institutions in 1995-96. The central government views the post-secondary education of minorities as an integral part of the overall economic and cultural development of minority regions: those sent to national universities as ethnic minority classes (*minzu ban*), as well as a number of those at Nationalities Institutes, are required to sign contracts pledging to return to their home region.

## 8. Preferential Policies: Family Planning

Preferential policies on marriage and family planning vary from region to region in China. Generally, minorities may marry two years earlier than Han Chinese, for whom the minimum age is 20 for males and 18 for females. Though China implemented a one-child-per-family policy in 1980 to stem its explosive population growth, officially recognized minorities are partially exempt. Those in urban areas have been allowed two children (or three if both are girls or one is disabled); those in rural areas, generally three. In contrast, the Han Chinese are allowed two in rural areas. Violations of these limits result in monetary penalties, which are decided locally. A first violation might cost 1000 *yuan* (\$120) – two months' income for the average citizen – whereas a second violation could cost up to ten times that amount. Nonetheless, larger families are common in remote rural areas, due to the need for farm hands and a general preference for male children.

## 9. Religion

The dominant religions of China are Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religion. For many minori-



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ties, professing a religious belief distinct from that of the Hans has been a vital means of maintaining identity.

The PRC government discouraged religion but did not ban it outright, except for the disastrous period of the so-called Cultural Revolution, 1966–78. Then, most places of worship, be they Buddhist monasteries, Daoist temples, Muslim mosques or Christian churches, were closed or destroyed and the clergy forced into labor. From 1978 to the early 1990s, religious observance was quietly renewed and expanded by many ethnic groups including the Han; a number of temples, monasteries, mosques, and churches were built or refurbished during this period. From the mid-1990s on, however, increasing political restrictions in minority areas were accompanied by increasing censure of religion by the central government. Party members have never been allowed to openly practice religion. Chinese minorities represent a wide spectrum of religious belief:

*Islam.* With 20 million adherents in China, Islam is the largest minority religion. Besides the Chinese-speaking Hui, most are speakers of Turkic languages in western China are Muslims: Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Tatar, Uzbek, Salar, and some Mongolic groups (Baonan and Dongxiang), and the so-called Tajiks (more accurately Sarikoli and Wakhi).

*Buddhism.* Most Buddhist minorities are Lamaists (i.e. Tibetan Buddhists, 1.3 million), overwhelmingly Tibeto-Burman (Tibetans, Naxi, Mosuo (officially also Naxi)) and Mongolic peoples (Mongols, Dagurs, Eastern Yugur). The Dai are primarily Hinayana Buddhists.

*Folk Religion.* Many ethnic groups have animist practices, at least historically; most of the Altaic peoples (Turkic, Mongolic, and Manchu-Tungusic speakers) have a long history of employing trance mediums. Those groups still preserving more active animist and shamanist practices include the Mongolic Dagur and Monguor (Tu), the Tungusic Ewenki and Orochen, the Hani, the Naxi, the Mosuo, and some Austronesian groups on Taiwan. In addition, most all minorities within the Chinese cultural sphere of influence practice ancestor worship, including Muslim Chinese.

*Polytheism.* Polytheism is attributed to a number of minority groups in southwestern and southern China, including the Yao, Yi, Zhuang, and

Hani Nationalities. Often, polytheism is comprised of a syncretic system of worship, which includes local elements, Chinese religious elements, and external religious elements. For example, the Hani groups, Tibeto-Burman peoples of Yunnan and Guizhou provinces, are subject to an number of spirits of natural topography and the weather, of heaven and earth, and of the underworld. While Buddhism and Daoism, interpreted as Chinese polytheism, have made some inroad, Christianity has had little impact in these regions.

*Christianity.* Christianity was introduced in waves from the ninth century onwards, though it was adopted by only a few minority group members in China. Presbyterian and Catholic missionaries on Taiwan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, managed to convert up to 70% of the indigenous peoples there. In the PRC, Catholic communication with the Vatican is frowned upon.

*Judaism.* The oldest Jewish community was in Kaifeng, Henan province, where a synagogue and a sizeable population flourished from at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE until the synagogue's demolition in 1860. These Jews were overwhelmingly assimilated. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, smaller immigrant Jewish communities existed in Shanghai and Harbin. During the mid-1980s, intellectuals who knew themselves to be descended from Jews near Kaifeng contemplated petitioning for recognition as a Minority Nationality. Such a move was not viewed favorably by the PRC government, and today Chinese Jews, some of whom are re-learning traditions of their ancestors, are generally discouraged from publicly discussing their heritage.

## 10. Survey by Geographic Region

National minorities are concentrated on China's peripheries, except for the Muslim Chinese Hui and to a lesser extent the Manchus, who are found throughout China (though still concentrated in the Northwest and Northeast, respectively).

The minorities of North China are traditionally pastoral nomads with hierarchically structured societies. Historically, due to their nomadic life and powers of archery, these nomads regularly established vast but short-lived empires. These included the forerunners of the modern northern Chinese minorities, such as the Huns, Kitan, Jurchen, Mongols and Manchus.

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### The Northeast: Manchuria

Northeastern China, which includes Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning provinces, is part of a temperate forest and taiga ecology that today is a farming area. The western part of Manchuria falls today within the Inner Mongolian region. Though the area today is heavily settled by Han agriculturalists and plays host to China's Rust Belt, it is home to some 20-30 groups and subgroups, many of them Tungusic. The largest of these is the Manchu group (*Manju*, in Chinese *Man*), who ruled China as the foreign Qing dynasty from 1644-1911. By the end of that dynasty, most Manchus were so well integrated into Chinese society that they rapidly lost their language. Today, the Manchu language is virtually extinct, except for a handful of speakers in Manchuria and, significantly, a group sent to western Jungaria in 1763-1765, which today is located in the Yili Valley of Xinjiang and known as the Sibe (Ch. *Xibo*, pop. 188,824 in 2000). Though most all Manchus today speak Chinese, the number of Manchus in the country has soared to 10.7 million in 2000, as people recognize the benefits of preferential minority policies.

The remaining minority population consists of small pockets of Tungusic and Mongolic peoples. The Tungusic groups, who were traditionally reindeer herders, consist of the Nanay (in Chinese *Hezhen*, pop. 4640, including the Nanay, Kili, Ulcha, and Oroq groups); Evenki (including the Orochen (Ch. *Elunchun*, pop. 8196), Solon (Ch. *Ewenke*, pop. 30,505), and Negidal groups); the Udege (including the Oroch, Taz, and Kyakalas). Many of these had extended contact with Mongolic peoples concentrated in western Manchuria: the Khamnigan, Buryat, and Bargut Mongols, as well as Dagur. All of the latter Mongolic speakers except the Dagur (Ch. *Dawuer*, 132,394) are officially classified as one Mongolian group (*Menggu*). Up to 900 Khakas (i.e. South Siberian Turkic) are found in Manchuria, though their speakers number less than a dozen. Nearly two million Koreans inhabit Manchuria and have limited schooling and media available in their language.

### Northern Inner Asia: Inner Mongolia

Mongolic peoples today are found from the Outer Mongolia in the north, through Inner Mongolia to the Ordos area of Yellow River, and westwards to the Jungarian Basin. From the 20<sup>th</sup> c. onwards, Mongolic peoples have found

themselves on two sides of an international border, both in China and also Mongolia (which declared independence in 1921, became the People's Republic of Mongolia in 1924 and had strong ties to the USSR until democratization in 1989). After 1950, the pastoral Mongolic population became largely sedentarized with the massive influx of Han Chinese farmers, who came to outnumber Mongols 5:1 in most areas. Officially, the arid steppe plateau of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region is populated by "Mongols" (*Menggu*) including Buryat and Bargu (in the northeast), Oyrat (in the west and Xinjiang), Alai (northwest), Chakhar (central), and Khorchin in the south. Desertification due to farming and demographic pressure is a major issue.

### Western Inner Asia: Xinjiang

Xinjiang, the 'New Dominion' (or 'Eastern Turkestan') has long been a crossroads of civilizations due to its oases midway along the arid "Silk Route." The 13 recognized Nationalities of the Xinjiang Uyghur [sic] Autonomous Region are predominantly Turkic peoples. The nomadic or historically nomadic groups (Kazakh (pop. 1.25 million, 2000), Kirghiz (0.16 m.), Mongol (Kalmyk Oyrat, ca. 110,000) inhabit the central and northern mountain areas around the Jungarian Basin; the agriculturalists (Uyghur, Uzbek (0.012 m.), and now Han and Muslim Chinese (Hui)) inhabit the oases ringing the Tarim Basin in the south, as well as the Yili valley in the west. As in Inner Mongolia, the immigration of Han Chinese in the last 50 years has resulted in a changed demographic, with 38.7% of the population of 18 million Han Chinese, 46.5% Uyghur and 14.8% other, not including at least one million Chinese troops and ca. 100,000 itinerant laborers. Shortages of arable land and especially water due to this immigration have resulted in widespread unease with Chinese rule, which occasionally turns violent. The PRC's concern that Uyghur separatists will threaten China's territorial integrity has resulted in intensified restrictions on religious organizations, alleging that some are linked with terrorists and Islamic fundamentalists. The vast territory is populated by a number of smaller groups, including Tuvans in the far north (who are officially Mongols), modern Manchu speakers known as Sibe in the west, and Iranic peoples in the southwest (Sarikoli and Wakhi), as well as small populations of Russians, Tatars,

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and Ainus (Abdal, who speak a Uyghur-Iranic jargon).

### Southern Inner Asia: Greater Tibet

The area that is culturally and geographically Tibetan includes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), western Sichuan, southern Gansu, and Qinghai provinces. It is an arid high plateau populated by nomadic herders and sedentary barley and wheat farmers. Predominant among all ethnic groups of the plateau are varieties of Tibetan Buddhism, which often coexist with folk religions and, along the northern periphery, Islam. The Tibetans proper (Ch. *Zang*) comprise three major dialect-cultural areas: Amdo in the northeast (pop. ca. 850,000), Central (Dbus-gtsang, including Lhasa, 1.1 m. (1990)), and Khams in the east and north (1.5 m. (1994)). The designation *Zang* also includes a number of other unrecognized Tibeto-Burman groups, such as the Atuence, Groma, Nyarong, Gyarong, Deng, Lhomi, Panang, Tseku, and Tinan Lahul. Han immigration to the TAR has not been nearly as dramatic as elsewhere, though the Han population there has increased to 5.9% of the population (2000), excluding itinerant merchants and laborers.

On the eastern periphery of the greater region are a number of largely pastoralist Tibeto-Burman speakers, such as the Qiang (Sichuan, pop. 306,000); Moinba (TAR, Ch. *Menba*, 8923); Lhoba (TAR, 2965) Bogar (southeastern TAR, 3000, classified as Lhoba), and the Nu (northwestern Yunnan, 28,759). One rather newly-discovered group, the Guichong of Sichuan, remains unclassified.

Amdo (Northeastern) Tibet also includes other groups whose languages and cultures are heavily influenced by the Amdo Tibetans, such as the Muslim Mongolic-speaking Baonan, the Santa (Ch. *Dongxiang*), Enger/Shera Yugur (Ch. *Dongbu Yugur*), the Monguor (Ch. *Tu*), and the Turkic-speaking Sari Yugur (Ch. *Xibu Yugur*).

### The Southwest

The Chinese Southwest, including Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Guangxi provinces, is one of the most ethnically diverse of China. Many Tibeto-Burman peoples live in this area as well as representatives of the major ethnic groups of Southeast Asia: Tai-Kadai, Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien, and many numerically smaller groups. The most populous minority

groups include the Yi, Miao, Yao, and Zhuang. The area is mountainous, temperate in the north and tropical in the south. Ethnic tourism is popular here, despite the extreme poverty in the southeast of this area.

### *Tibeto-Burman peoples*

The Yi Nationality, a branch of Tibeto-Burman, encompasses a number of ethnic groups and up to 20 languages, which can be broadly classified into six ethnolinguistic regions: the northern standard in Sichuan (Xide), the Nuosu of the Sichuan-Yunnan border, those in central Yunnan (Lipo, Dayao and Nanhua), southeastern Yi in Yunnan (Ahi, Axi, and Sani), southern (Dian-Qian) in Yunnan and Guizhou, and those in western Yunnan (Dongshan and Xishan). Yis today are still aware of their caste origins, which entailed a hierarchy of the aristocratic Black Yi, the former Han-slave White Yi, and recent former slaves.

Independent agriculturalist Nationalities who speak an Yi-group Tibeto-Burman language include the Hani and Lisu; the diverse Hani (known as Akha in Thailand) have a population of 1.44 m. (2000), including three regional dialects Ha-Ai, Bi-Kaw, and Hao-Bai; the Lisu (comprising the Anung and Che-nung) have a population of 634,912, and live in Yunnan and Sichuan.

The Tibeto-Burman Naxi of northwestern Yunnan, pop. 308,839 (2000), boast a unique ideographic writing system. The Mosuo (also classified as Naxi) practices matrilineal descent and 'walking marriage.'

A separate branch of the Tibet-Burman languages is represented by Qiang (autonym *Rma*, pop. 306,072 (2000)), spoken from northwestern Sichuan to Yunnan. Both pastoralists and agriculturalists, the Qiang have maintained close contact with the Han and Zhuang. The Tibeto-Burman Prmi (Ch. *Pumi*), living near the Mosuo, number 33,600 and were long considered a branch of the Qiang peoples; they comprise three ethnolinguistic groups: Phzomi, Phzome, Tshomi. These pastoral peoples inhabit northwestern Yunnan and practice both Tibetan Buddhism and polytheism.

The Lahu (453,705, including Na, Ni, Shehleh) are another major subgroup of Tibeto-Burman in Yunnan.

The Bai of Yunnan and Guizhou (pop. 1.86 m.) are difficult to classify, and the three dialects of Dali, Jianchuan, and Bijiang may be separate languages. They are likely a branch of

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Tibeto-Burman and have had close contact with the Han.

Peoples of the Kachin subgroup include the Achang Nationality (pop. 27,708) and the closely related Jingpo (132,143, subgroup Guari and the unrelated Zaiwa) and Drung (Ch. *Delong*, 7426) Nationalities. The rGyarong peoples of northwestern Sichuan, who number at least 230,000 and include the Horpa, Jiarong, Shangzhai, and Guanyinqiao, are officially Tibetan.

One unclassified Himalayish Tibeto-Burman group are the Baima of Yunnan (pop. 110,000 (1995)). Finally, on the eastern edge of this region, in Guizhou, Hunan, and Hubei, are the agriculturalist Tujia. This group, though large, is largely assimilated to Han culture.

#### *Tai-Kadai (Zhuang-Dong) peoples*

The eponymous Tai (Ch. *Dai*) is a huge group (pop. 1.16 m.) comprising three subgroups: Dai-lu, Daina, and Daija. They inhabit tropical river valleys and are rice farmers. The northeasternmost extension of Tai culture is represented by the Kam (Ch. *Dong*, pop. 2.96 m.) in Guizhou and Guangxi. Closely related independent Nationalities in Guangxi and Guizhou include the agriculturalist Maonan (pop. 107,166), Mulam (Ch. *Mulao*, pop. 207,352), and Shui (or Sui, pop. 406,902), and Gelao (0.58 m.). Other unrecognized Tai-Kadai groups include the Buyang (officially Zhuang); Cun (officially Han); and Then (officially Buyi).

The Zhuang, China's largest Nationality (and includes the subgroups Gubei and Guibian), live principally in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The Buyi, whose language is closely related to northern Zhuang, are classified as a separate Nationality and found primarily in southern Guizhou.

#### *Mon-Khmer peoples*

Most of the Mon-Khmer peoples, part of the larger Austroasiatic family, are farmers. In Yunnan, the Blang (pop. 91,882) enjoy official recognition and are Theravada Buddhists; other officially recognized Yunnan frontier peoples include the De'ang (a.k.a. Benlong, pop. 17,935), and the Va (Ch. *Wa* incl. A-wa, Amok, pop. 0.40 m.).

#### *Hmong-Mien (Miao-Yao) peoples*

The Miao Nationality is closely related to the Hmongs of Southeast Asia, found in Guizhou,

Sichuan and Guangxi. Chinese military campaigns against the Miao in the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries resulted in 70 or more subgroups; within China alone, there are seven major ethnolinguistic groups with mutually unintelligible languages: Central (*Chuanqiandian*) Black, Red, White, Azure, Flower, Grass. A closely related group is the Gelao (Guizhou, 0.58 m.)

*Yao* (pop. 2.6 million) is another umbrella term for four distinct ethnolinguistic groups; the Biao Min, Kim Mun, Mien, and Yao Min. Also includes the Tai-Kadai Yerong people. Mixed hunting, foraging, and agriculture has resulted in their being spread throughout Guangxi, Hunan, Guangdong, Guizhou, and Yunnan.

The Grass Miao (*Cao Miao*, *Mjiuniang*) and the Tea Mountain Yao (*Chashan Yao*, *Lak-kja*), though classed as Miao-Yao, are linguistically Tai-Kadai speakers.

### **The Southeast**

Though the Southeast is one of the most populous areas of China, the non-Han minority population is scant. The main exceptions are the peoples of Hainan island and the She Nationality in Fujian, Zhejiang, and Guangxi (pop 0.7 m.); the latter are related to the Miao but now speak Chinese.

Hainan Island, off the coast of Guangdong province, became a province in 1988. It is home to Li (1.25 million, including Jiamao and Hlai, Tai-Kadai languages) who are agriculturalists living in tropical forest mountains at the center of Hainan island (include Bendi, Qi, Ha languages). Also represented are the Lingao (Ongbe, 0.5 m.) and the Chamic Tsat people (pop. 4500). The latter are Muslims, officially of the Hui Nationality.

### **Taiwan**

Taiwan's indigenous peoples, numbering 433,689 in 2002, are Austronesian and boast a 12,000 year history on the island. Though in the PRC all indigenous peoples on Taiwan are known as the Gaoshan Nationality, they comprise the following official indigenous groups: Atayal, Saisiyat, Bunun, Tsou, Paiwan, Rukai, Puyuma, Ami, Shao (newly classified in 2002), and Yami. At least eleven assimilated groups who once lived on the western plains of Taiwan have been subsumed under the cover term *Pingpu*. Those dwelling in the mountains or east coast have better resisted assimilation.



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The indigenous peoples of Taiwan (ROC) were formerly called *shanbao* 山胞 ‘mountain compatriots,’ but this pejorative term was replaced in 1994 by *yuanzhumin* 原住民 ‘indigenous peoples.’ The National Assembly also passed Additional Articles to the ROC Constitution which accorded indigenous people equal legal status, the right to political participation, and “...assistance and encouragement for their education, cultural preservation, social welfare, and business undertakings.”

In 1996, the national government established the Council of Aboriginal Affairs; minority rights to participate in educational policies and reforms were guaranteed in the Aboriginal Education Act of 1998. Nine seats in the Legislative are reserved for indigenous peoples. Finally, an aboriginal school of ethnology (the College of Indigenous Studies, Donghuan University) was recently established.

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